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Democrats consider piecemeal approach to immigration reform

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After decades of failed attempts to pass comprehensive immigration legislation, congressional Democrats and President Joe Biden are signaling openness to a piece-by-piece approach. They unveiled a broad bill on Thursday that would provide an eight-year pathway to citizenship for 11 million people living in the country without legal status. There are other provisions, too, but the Democrats are not talking all-or-nothing.

"Even though I support full, comprehensive immigration reform, I'm ready to move on piecemeal, because I don't want to end up with good intentions on my hands and not have

anything," said Texas Rep. Henry Cuellar. "I'd rather have progress."

The pragmatic approach is a clear recognition of the past failures to deliver on a large-scale immigration overhaul — and how success could be even more difficult in a highly polarized, closely divided Congress.

The Democrats' legislation reflects the broad priorities for immigration changes that Biden laid out on his first day in office, including an increase in visas, more money to process asylum applications, new technology at the southern border and funding for economic development in Latin American countries.

Continued on next page



In this Sept. 13, 2019, file photo, Central American migrants wait to see if their number will be called to cross the border and apply for asylum in the United States, at the El Chaparral border crossing in Tijuana, Mexico.

Associated Press

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Continued from Front

But advocates for expansive immigration say they could pursue smaller bills focused on citizenship for groups such as young immigrants brought to the U.S. by their parents as children, for agricultural workers and other essential labor.

"I know what it's like to lose on big bills and small bills. The fear that people have experienced in the last four years deserves every single opportunity, every single bill to remedy," said Greisa Martinez Rosas, executive director for United We Dream, an immigration advocacy group.

"The biggest thing here is that we're going to get something across the finish line, because not doing so is not an option."

The broad legislation — which includes a pathway to citizenship, but not much in the way of the enhanced border security that's typically offered to win Republican votes — faces long odds with Democrats holding only a slender majority in Congress.

Comprehensive bills negotiated by bipartisan teams of lawmakers failed multiple times during Republican George W. Bush's administration and again in 2013 during Democrat Barack Obama's.

Republican Donald Trump signed legislation that increased border security, and took executive action to restrict legal immigra-



Honduran boys whose family wants to seek asylum in the U.S., play on the sidewalk in Tijuana, Mexico, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

Associated Press

tion to the U.S. and remove some protections for immigrants living in the country set by Obama. Biden has signed a number of executive orders rolling back some of the Trump restrictions, but he promised throughout his campaign and transition that immigration overhaul would be a top priority.

The White House insisted Thursday there have been no decisions on strategy. But multiple immigration organizations said administration officials had signaled in recent conversations that they were open to a multilevel approach in which lawmakers would press forward on the comprehensive bill while also pursuing individual pieces.

Cuellar, who was in office for most of those early, failed attempts, said many in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus are still committed to a comprehensive overhaul. He said the White House reached out to him and he advised them to start with a broad bill, but he added that "reality is going to hit people, hopefully," and more lawmakers will get on board with a more incremental approach.

Indeed, Biden himself suggested in a CNN town hall Tuesday night that "there's things I would deal by itself." One of the lead sponsors of the bill, New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez, too, seemed to suggest Thursday he was open to a less

expansive approach. "If we can get certain elements of this standing up and passed individually both in the House and the Senate, that's great," he said. Tom Jawetz, vice president for immigration policy at the Center for American Progress, said that Biden's decades of experience in the Senate have given him a realistic view of what's possible.

"He also knows how to count votes, and he knows what it takes to get legislation across the line," he said. "And so I think there is real energy behind pressing forward on all fronts and seeing what shakes out."

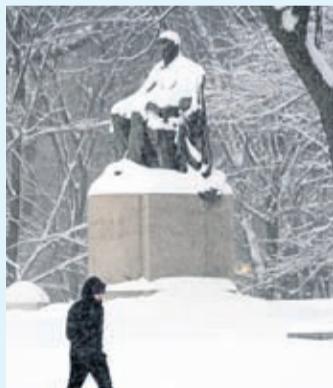
Democrats have a third option: Using a parliamentary maneuver to attach

some immigration items to a budget bill, which would then require just 51 votes to pass. Advocates have been pressing the new administration to consider attaching a pathway to citizenship for some to an economic stimulus package that they're expected to introduce after they've passed the COVID-19 bill. That approach would almost certainly face a strong procedural challenge.

"The ultimate goal is to make sure that 2022 doesn't come around, and we have done nothing on immigration for another Congress," said Jawetz.

Democrats have expressed optimism that this time will be different not just because of the shift in strategy, but also because they say the politics of the issue have changed. They point to support from business groups for reform, and they note that Latinos are not a monolithic Democratic voting bloc, that Trump improved his showing with Latino voters in the 2020 election. Martinez Rosas said that if Congress fails to take action on reform, it will "absolutely" be a problem for Democrats in elections in 2022 and beyond. "This will be the fight, the defining fight," she said. "The difference between now and in 2013, is that the progressive movement is unified around the acknowledgment that immigration is a must-fix issue." □

Fate of Honest Abe statues under review in Chicago, honestly



A lone man walks in a light snow storm through Chicago's Grant Park Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021, past a snow covered statue of Abraham Lincoln during day two of a winter storm that is expected to dump nearly one foot of snow in the greater Chicago area.

Associated Press

A city commission is determining the fate of monuments to Abraham Lincoln and George Washington and other historical figures in Chicago as part of a "racial healing and historical reckoning project" that began over the summer.

No decision has been made on whether any of the 41 statues and other commemorative markers of presidents Lincoln, Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Ulysses S. Grant and William McKinley, and more, will be taken down. But in a city where Lincoln Park and Grant Park attract visitors from around the world

and in a state that the license plates call the "Land of Lincoln," the review adds a new wrinkle into the national conversation about honoring historical figures tied to slavery, oppression or subjugation.

"This project is a powerful opportunity for us to come together as a city to assess the many monuments and memorials across our neighborhoods and communities — to face our history and what and how we memorialize that history," Mayor Lori Lightfoot said in a statement. "Given the past year and in particular the past summer

that made clear history isn't past, it is essential that residents are a part of this conversation."

The Chicago Monuments Project was launched over the summer to review more than 500 statues and monuments. On Wednesday, besides identifying statues and markers of Lincoln, Washington and others for review, the city launched a website that details those flagged for review by the mayor's commission on monuments.

Chicago is among several U.S. cities that have been dealing with disputes over monuments celebrating

Christopher Columbus, Confederate leaders and other slave owners. In the wake of the May 25 killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody, activists — angry about Columbus' mistreatment of Indigenous people — clashed with police in Chicago as they tried to forcibly remove a statue of the explorer.

Lightfoot ordered the "temporary" removal of Columbus statues and it was unclear when or if they will be returned. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War that freed the slaves. □

In U-turn, feds defend including undocumented in House count

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

Associated Press

In a reversal of policy under then-President Donald Trump, Biden administration attorneys are arguing that the state of Alabama has no standing in trying to stop the U.S. Census Bureau from including people in the country illegally from the numbers used for divvying up congressional seats. A federal judge should dismiss a lawsuit from Alabama and Republican U.S. Rep. Morris "Mo" Brooks seeking the exclusion of people in the country illegally from the apportionment numbers, attorneys for President Joe Biden's administration said in court papers Wednesday. At the very least, the judge should put the court case on hold until the Census Bureau releases apportionment figures by the end of April that will show whether Alabama keeps seven congressional seats or drops to six, they said.

"The possibility that Alabama might receive only six House seats is, by definition, contingent and speculative," Biden administration attorneys said. "After all, Alabama might well retain seven House seats regardless of whether undocumented immigrants



This combination of photos shows people riding bicycles in New York's Times Square, left, on April 29, 2020, and in Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Ala., March 12, 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic.

Associated Press

are included in the apportionment base."

A lot has happened since Alabama first filed the lawsuit in 2018 in a preemptive move to save the state from losing a congressional seat during the process in which the House of Representatives' 435 voting seats are divided up among the states based on a population count conducted during the once-a-decade census.

Last year, Trump issued a memorandum that aligned his administration's posi-

tion with Alabama's efforts to exclude people in the country illegally from the apportionment count. After the memorandum was challenged in multiple lawsuits, the Supreme Court ruled it was premature to decide on its legality because it wasn't yet clear how many people would be excluded and whether the division of House seats would be affected. Finally, on his first day in office last month, Biden rescinded Trump's memorandum, as well as a Trump order di-

recting the Census Bureau to produce citizenship data.

With all that going on, the judge in the Alabama case wanted an update this week on how to proceed from all sides, including several states and civil rights groups that are fighting Alabama's efforts and say any harm to the Cotton State is too speculative at this point.

The Alabama case is the last one pending over whether people in the U.S. illegally can be excluded

from the apportionment count.

The Justice Department asked a judge to dismiss the lawsuit two years ago. But it was well before Trump issued his memorandum on apportionment, putting Department of Justice attorneys in the awkward spot of defending a position in opposition to administration policy. But U.S. District Judge David Proctor allowed the case to proceed. After Trump issued his memo last July, the Alabama case was placed on hold until the Supreme Court could rule on the memo's challenges in other lawsuits.

Biden's order has nullified Alabama's challenge to a Census Bureau rule that says people should be counted where they live and sleep most of the time since the new president's directive requires the apportionment count to include the total number of people living in each state regardless of immigration status, Biden administration attorneys said. If Alabama wants to continue the case, a three-judge panel needs to be appointed since it will present a challenge to the constitutionality of the apportionment process, they said. □

Judge dismisses Georgia lawsuit by transgender fire chief

By RUSS BYNUM

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — A federal judge has dismissed a discrimination lawsuit by a transgender fire chief who led a rural Georgia city's fire department for more than a decade, then got fired 18 months after first coming to work as a woman.

U.S. District Court Judge Tilman E. Self III didn't rule on the merits of Rachel Mosby's discrimination claims. Instead, the judge decided Mosby had no legal standing to sue because of a technical flaw with the initial complaint she filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Mosby's attorney, Kenneth Barton, said in a court fil-

ing Feb. 2 that he planned to appeal the judge's dismissal.

City officials in Byron fired Mosby in June 2019, citing poor job performance. She filed suit last April, saying her termination was instead "based on her sex, gender identity, and notions of sex stereotyping."

Mosby, who had led Byron's fire department since 2008, said being fired not only cost her wages and financial benefits, but also tarnished her reputation.

Mayor Michael Chidester and other Byron city officials denied Mosby was fired because of her transition.

The judge dismissed the case without wading into that issue. Instead, he fo-

cused on problems with the 2019 complaint Mosby filed with the EEOC — a required step before someone can sue an employer for discrimination.

Tilman found Mosby's initial complaint to the EEOC on June 28, 2019, failed to include a written sworn statement or notarized affirmation as the agency requires. Though Mosby's attorney tried to amend the complaint to include the missing document last July, the judge ruled that was too late because the EEOC had already closed Mosby's case and she had filed suit.

Tilman's ruling Jan. 28 also threw out Mosby's claims that Byron officials had denied her due process and



In this Sept. 26, 2019, file photo, former Byron, Ga., fire chief Rachel Mosby poses for a photo in the home of a friend in Atlanta.

Associated Press

defamed her character. In a landmark decision last June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a provision of the Civil Rights Act of

1964 that prohibits sex discrimination applies to bias against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity. □

South Dakota's AG charged with 3 misdemeanors in fatal crash

By STEPHEN GROVES

Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's Republican attorney general has been charged with misdemeanor careless driving after he struck and killed a man with his car, authorities said Thursday.

Jason Ravnsborg is also facing misdemeanor charges of operating a motor vehicle while using a mobile electronic device and veering out of his lane, Emily Sovell, deputy Hyde County state's attorney, announced. Authorities said he was not on his phone at the time of the crash.

Each charge is punishable by up to 30 days in jail and/or a \$500 fine, Sovell said.

Sovell said the evidence didn't support more serious felony charges such as vehicular homicide or manslaughter. She noted that nothing showed Ravnsborg was intoxicated at the time of the crash. She also said that to prove manslaughter, the state would have had to show that Ravnsborg "consciously and unjustifiably" disregarded a substantial risk.

Ravnsborg has said he is confident he did not commit a crime, and that he was not drinking before the crash. He provided a blood sample and handed over his electronic devices to investigators. A toxicology report from a sample taken roughly 15 hours after the crash



In this Feb. 23, 2014, file photo, Jason Ravnsborg speaks in Sioux Falls, S.D.
Associated Press

showed no alcohol in Ravnsborg's system.

Boever's family has questioned Ravnsborg's account, and expressed frustration at the five-month wait to hear whether he would face charges.

Beadle County State's Attorney Michael Moore, who helped with the

case, said the Boever family had been told of the decision beforehand.

"They obviously don't like our decision in this case, but as we all know, victims don't make this decision," Moore said. Later, pressed by a reporter, Moore added: "I don't feel good about it, but it's the right de-

cision."

Ravnsborg, who was elected to his first term in 2018, initially told authorities he thought he had struck a deer or another large animal as he drove home to Pierre from a Republican fundraiser late on Sept. 12. He said he didn't realize he had killed a man until he returned to the accident scene the next day. Crash investigators said in November that Ravnsborg was distracted when he veered onto the shoulder of the highway where 55-year-old Joseph Boever was walking. But prosecutors took months more to make a charging decision in the crash, launching an investigation that considered cellphone GPS data, video footage from along Ravnsborg's route and DNA evidence.

A crash reconstruction expert from Wyoming and the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation assisted the South Dakota Highway Patrol in the investigation. Such accidents would ordinarily be investigated by the South Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, which answers to the attorney general's office. The other agencies took on the investigation to avoid a conflict of interest.

South Dakota law requires pedestrians to walk on the side of the road facing oncoming traffic when walking near highways like the one where the crash occurred. □

Donations pour in to rebuild Newman's camp for sick kids



A early evening fire destroyed several buildings at the Hole In The Wall Gang Camp, Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 in Ashford, Conn.

Associated Press

By PAT EATON-ROBB

Associated Press

Less than a week after a fire tore through Hole in the Wall Gang camp for seriously ill children in Connecticut, almost \$3 million has been raised to help rebuild the facility that was founded by the late actor

Paul Newman.

That includes pledges of \$1 million from the Newman's Own Foundation and a promise by Travelers and the Travelers Championship PGA golf tournament to match up to \$1 million in other donations.

Jimmy Canton, the camp's

chief executive officer said Friday that just over \$900,000 has come in from other sources, including charitable foundations, individuals including celebrities such as golfer Bubba Watson, and even the families of campers.

"It's just been so inspiring," Canton said.

Carly Demartino, 16, of Granby has been attending camp since 2016 after she was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor. Being able to do things such as scale the camp's climbing tower and zip line to the bottom gave her a feeling of accomplishment and normalcy, she said.

"Everyone who has been to camp has had their bump in the road...so now that Hole in the Wall has hit its bump in the road, we want to pay it back," she said. "Having had such great ex-

periences there, we want to bring it back to what it was."

Canton said insurance will cover much of the rebuilding costs, but the plan is to construct a better, much larger and safer single-level complex that is more accessible to children with a wide variety of physical needs.

The camp was built in 1988 to accommodate about 300 children each summer, he said. The charity now serves about 20,000 kids a year on site and through community and hospital-based programming.

"Those structures were intended and designed to house life-changing memories and they served their purpose beautifully," Canton said. "That energy and those memories make our campground sacred and those new structures will

hold those memories as well and be ready to take on new ones."

Canton said they plan to build the new buildings out of something more durable than wood, will include sprinkler systems and large underground cisterns.

Fire departments used tankers and water from the camp's pond to put out the Feb. 12 blaze, which destroyed buildings housing the camp's woodshop, arts and crafts, cooking, creative writing program and camp store. The fire remains under investigation, but authorities have said they have not found any evidence of arson.

Camp director Alan Pender was the only person at the camp when the fire broke out, Canton said. He and fire officials were alerted to the blaze by an automated alarm. □

France to boost cyberdefense after hospital malware attacks

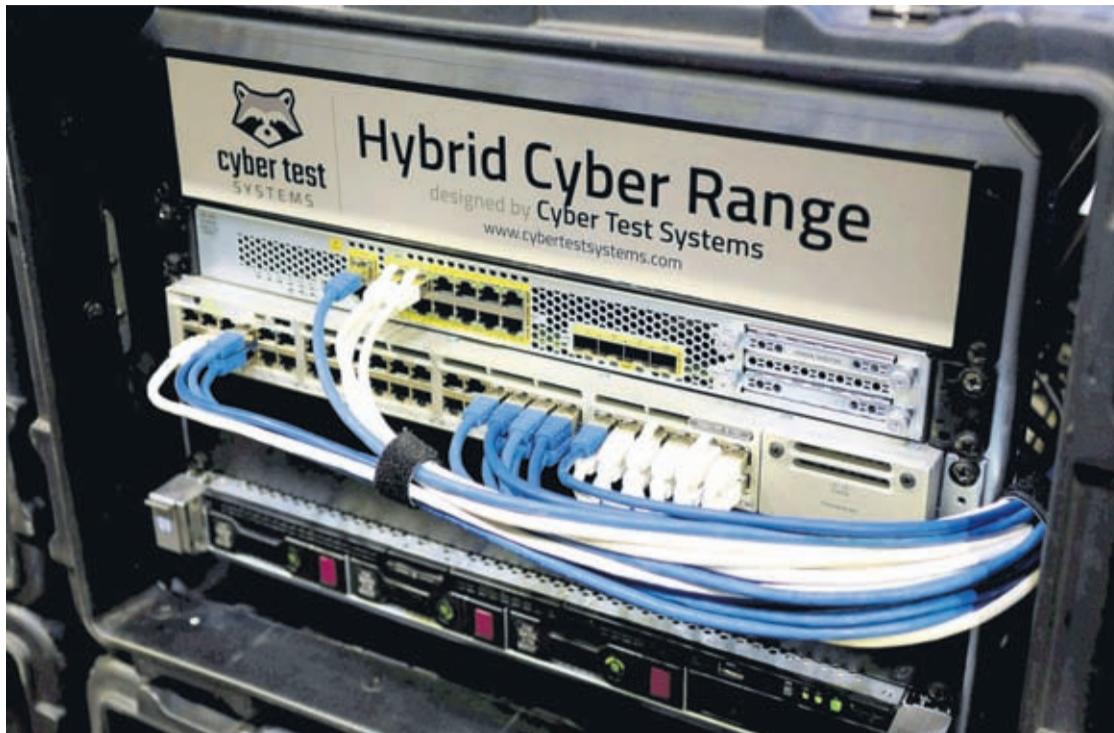
By SYLVIE CORBET

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday unveiled a plan to better arm public facilities and private companies against cybercriminals following ransomware attacks at two hospitals this month and an upsurge of similar cyber assaults in France. The attacks at the hospitals in Dax and Villefranche-sur-Saone prompted the transfer of some patients to other facilities as the French health care system is under pressure from the coronavirus pandemic.

Macron discussed the attacks with officials and workers from both hospitals, saying the incident "shows how the threat is very serious, sometimes vital."

"We are learning about these new attacks, some coming from states as part of new conflicts between nations, others coming from mafias," the French leader said during a video-conference. Some attacks have "criminal" or "lucrative" motives, others are used to "destabilize" countries, he added.

Macron referred to a massive hack of U.S. federal



In this Jan. 22, 2019 file photo, cables are plugged into a device by Cyber Test Systems at the Cybersecurity Conference in Lille, northern France.

Associated Press

agencies last year and to the stealing of vaccine documents from the European Medicine Agency in November.

He stressed the need for international cooperation among police and criminal justice agencies after Ukrainian authorities confirmed a ransomware program known as Egregor was dismantled in the country ear-

lier this month following a joint action by the United States, France and Ukraine. Macron's office said the government will earmark about 500 million euros (\$603 million) to help boost cyberdefense systems in the public and private sector.

The National Cybersecurity Agency of France (ANSSI) reported that ransomware

attacks surged 255% in 2020 compared to the previous year. All sectors and geographical areas of the country were included, but the increase particularly concerns the health care sector, the education system, local authorities and digital service providers, ANSSI said.

During ransomware attacks, cybercriminals infect

computers or computer systems with viruses that scramble and lock data until the targeted users pay a ransom.

The hospital in Villefranche-sur-Saone, located north of the city of Lyon, said its phone system went down during a cyberattack on Monday that forced a pre-emptive shutoff of the internet service and other networks to keep the ransomware from spreading.

The hospital also had to postpone surgeries planned for the following day, but said patient safety was preserved.

The Dax hospital in southwestern France reported a similar attack last week. Without phones and computers working, health care workers had to use pen and paper for record keeping. The French cybersecurity agency is helping to investigate the attacks.

ANSSI said Monday that an attack similar to one used by Russian hackers targeted a software distributed by the French company Centreon, resulting in the breach of "several French entities" from late 2017 to 2020. □

Dutch parliament approves new coronavirus curfew law

By MIKE CORDER

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Dutch parliament approved hastily drawn-up legislation Thursday underpinning the country's coronavirus curfew after a judge ordered the measure scrapped earlier this week.

The legislation is now expected to be debated by the senate on Friday — the same day that government lawyers go to court to appeal the order banning the 9 p.m.-to-4:30 a.m. curfew. If the senate approves the legislation, the curfew will remain in place and the appeal court's decision will become largely irrelevant. Maarten Hijink of the opposition Socialist Party gave the legislation his backing, but told the government: "Don't take the support as an appreciation of the way this Cabinet made such an

unbelievable mess of the judicial underpinning of the curfew."

Populist Geert Wilders was among opposition lawmakers who do not support the legislation introduced by Prime Minister Mark Rutte's government.

"What an embarrassment for Prime Minister Rutte, and what a hammer blow for the credibility of the corona policies of his Cabinet in general and the curfew in particular," said Wilders, who has repeatedly described the measure as disproportionate. He demanded that fines meted out for breaches of the curfew be canceled or repaid. The curfew, which sparked rioting last month but is very broadly supported and followed, remains in force pending the outcome of the government's appeal. A judge in The Hague

banned the curfew, saying the law the government used when it introduced the measure last month can only be wielded in pressing emergencies such as a massive dike breach. The government argues that the curfew became an urgent necessity because of the swift rise of new, more transmissible variants of the virus, particularly the one first discovered in Britain which has already gained ground in the Netherlands.

Rutte told lawmakers Thursday: "Of course, we regret the situation because it creates a lack of clarity. That's why the Cabinet has tried to create clarity as quickly as possible via ... the urgent appeal against the court decision and also the legislation we're talking about." The Netherlands has been in a tough lockdown since



De Waag on Nieuwmarkt Square, historically the eastern gateway to the city, is deserted during curfew in the center of Amsterdam, Saturday, Jan. 23, 2021.

Associated Press

mid-December, with all nonessential stores closed, along with bars, restaurants and other public venues. Elementary schools reopened this month, but all other schools and universities remain shut. Infections have been slow-

ly declining, with the 7-day rolling average of daily new cases decreasing over the past two weeks from 23.38 new cases per 100,000 people to 21.28 on Feb. 17. The country has more than 15,000 confirmed COVID-19 deaths. □

Killings surge in Syria camp housing Islamic State families

By BASSEM MROUE

BEIRUT (AP) — The deaths stacked up: a policeman shot dead with a pistol equipped with a silencer, a local official gunned down, his son wounded, an Iraqi man beheaded. In total, 20 men and women were killed last month in the sprawling camp in northeastern Syria housing families of the Islamic State group.

The slayings in al-Hol camp — nearly triple the deaths in previous months — are largely believed to have been carried out by IS militants punishing perceived enemies and intimidating anyone who wavers from their extremist line, say Syrian Kurdish officials who run the camp but say they struggle to keep it under control.

The jump in violence has heightened calls for countries to repatriate their citizens languishing in the camp, home to some 62,000 people. Those repatriations have slowed dramatically because of the coronavirus epidemic, officials say. If left there, the thousands of children in the camp risk being radicalized, local and U.N. officials warn.

"Al-Hol will be the womb that will give birth to new generations of extremists," said Abdullah Suleiman Ali, a Syrian researcher who focuses on jihadi groups.

It has been nearly two years since the U.S.-led coalition captured the last sliver of territory held by the Islamic State group, ending their self-declared caliphate that covered large parts of Iraq and Syria. The brutal war took several years and left U.S.-allied Kurdish authorities in control of eastern and northeast Syria, with a small presence of several hundred American forces still deployed there. Since then, remaining IS militants have gone underground in the Syrian-Iraqi border region, continuing an insurgency. Though attacks in Syria are lower than they were in late 2019, IS sleeper cells continue to strike Syrian government troops, forces of the Kurd-



In this March 31, 2019 file photo, women residents from former Islamic State-held areas in Syria line up for aid supplies at Al-Hol camp in Hassakeh province, Syria.

Associated Press

ish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and civilian administrators.

Al-Hol houses the wives, widows, children and other family members of IS militants — more than 80% of its 62,000 residents are women and children. The majority are Iraqis and Syrians, but it includes some 10,000 people from 57 other countries, housed in a highly secured separate area known as the Annex. Many of them remain die-hard IS supporters.

The camp has long been chaotic, with the hardcore militants among its population enforcing their will on others and seeking to prevent them from cooperating with Kurdish authorities guarding it.

IS cells in Syria are in contact with residents of the camp and support them, said a senior Kurdish official Badran Cia Kurd. "Anyone who tries to reveal these contacts or stops dealing with Daesh is subjected to death," he said, using the

Arabic acronym for IS. The U.S.-backed SDF tweeted last week that, backed by air surveillance from the coalition, they detained an IS family smuggler in the area of Hadadia near the camp.

"There are several reasons behind the increase of crime including attempts by Daesh members to impose their ideology in the camp against civilians who reject it," said Ali, the researcher.

Of the 20 killings at al-Hol in January, at least five of the dead were female residents of the camp, according to the Rojava Information Center, an activist collective that tracks news in areas controlled by the SDF. All the victims were Syrian or Iraqi citizens, including a member of the local police force, and most were killed in their tents or shelters at night, RIC said.

Most of the victims were shot in the back of their heads at close range, according to RIC and the Syr-

ian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based opposition war monitor.

On Jan. 9, a gunman killed a policeman in the camp using a silencer-equipped pistol, then as other police chased him, he threw a hand grenade that seriously wounded the patrol commander, the Observatory said. The same day, an official with a local council dealing with Syrian civilians in the camp was shot to death and his son critically wounded.

In another case, an Iraqi camp resident was decapitated, his head found some distance from his body, RIC reported. It is believed he was killed on suspicion he was cooperating with authorities.

Kurdish security officials did not respond for questions from The Associated Press about the situation.

The immediate cause for the jump in killings was not known. In November, Kurdish authorities began an amnesty program for

the 25,000 Syrian citizens in the camp, allowing them to leave. Some speculate that, since those taking amnesty must register and work with authorities, the program may have prompted slayings to keep residents in line. Many Syrians fear leaving the camp because they may face revenge attacks in their hometowns from those who suffered under IS rule. Whatever the cause, the bloodshed points to the IS strength within the camp. The local civilian Kurdish authority known as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria warned in late January that some sides are trying to revive IS and the authority cannot face this crisis on its own.

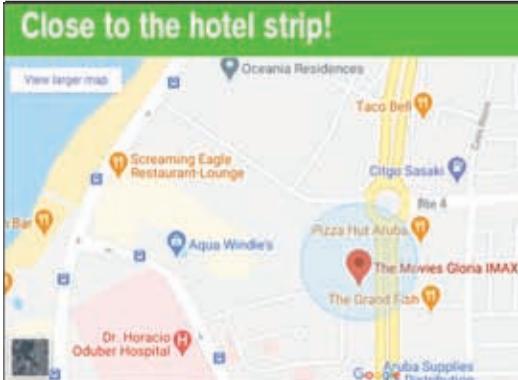
IS supporters in the camp carry out trials against residents suspected of opposing them and kill defendants, and authorities have uncovered several IS cells inside, it said. "Contacts are ongoing between the camp and Daesh commanders outside who direct their members inside," it said.

Some 27,000 non-Syrian children are stranded in al-Hol, including some 19,000 Iraqi children and 8,000 from other countries. On Jan. 30, U.N. counterterrorism chief Vladimir Voronkov urged home countries to repatriate the children, warning that they are at risk of radicalization.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought a drop in the already slow process of repatriation. Many countries have been reluctant to bring back their citizens, though France repatriated seven children in January and Britain one child in September.

Iraq has taken back very few. Repatriation by other countries dropped in 2020 to only 200 children, from 685 in 2019, according to Save the Children.

"These new figures show that before the outbreak of the virus, things were finally starting to move in the right direction," said Save the Children's Syria Response Director Sonia Khush. □



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Maduro lodges new allegation of U.S. spying on Venezuela firm

By SCOTT SMITH

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela

(AP) — Venezuela's president said Wednesday he is open to dialogue with the new U.S. administration on calming tensions between the two governments and easing his nation's economic crisis, even while doubling down with fresh accusations that six American oil executives jailed in Caracas spied for the CIA, a claim rejected by relatives and a defense lawyer in the case.

Nicolás Maduro, who spoke at a news conference with international reporters at the Miraflores presidential palace, refused to say whether he has had any direct contacts with the Biden administration, which took office nearly a month ago.

Maduro repeated a phrase he commonly uses, saying he is ready for a dialogue with the U.S. at any moment. The two nations broke ties two years ago when the Trump administration and dozens of other governments backed Maduro's leading adversary, Juan Guaidó, arguing that Maduro's presidency was illegitimate because



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro points to supporters during an event marking Youth Day at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, Feb. 12, 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Associated Press

his reelection was fraudulent.

The Trump administration heavily sanctioned Maduro and the Venezuelan oil sector as well as brought an indictment levying narcotics trafficking charges against Maduro that carry a \$15 million reward for his arrest.

Maduro is leading a campaign to resurrect his once-wealthy oil nation's

decimated economy after more than two decades of socialist rule. Maduro seeks relief from sanctions, blaming them for Venezuela's problems.

"Is there room for dialogue?" Maduro said in response to a question from The Associated Press on whether he has started conversation with U.S. President Joe Biden's administration.

"There's always room for

dialogue."

But the new accusations of spying against Citgo, a U.S.-based subsidiary of Venezuela's state oil company, will likely complicate efforts to win sympathy in Washington, where officials in Biden's State Department have already branded him a "dictator" who should not be engaged with in direct talks.

While Venezuela's eco-

nomic and political crisis deepened, the six Citgo executives were lured back to Caracas from the firm's headquarters in Houston and jailed on financial charges. Their trial ended in November, with a judge finding them all guilty and sentencing them to prison. Maduro's allegation of spying came in response to a question from AP on whether he could consider releasing U.S. citizens jailed in the U.S., including the so-called Citgo 6, as a goodwill gesture to the new U.S. administration.

He said that while diplomatic efforts are always available, he wouldn't get involved with criminal cases that had been tried in a Venezuelan court.

"I'm not a judge or prosecutor, and I shouldn't get involved in this subject," Maduro said, but he then accused the CIA of infiltrating Citgo. "They started to work as agents of the Central Intelligence Agency. ... This is the truth."

Maduro did not offer proof of his claim, which drew immediate pushback from Venezuelan attorney Jesus Loreto, who represented one of the six Citgo executives. □

China hits Canada for statement against arbitrary detention

BEIJING (AP) — China lashed out at Canada on Thursday for joining the U.S. and 56 other countries in endorsing a declaration denouncing state-sponsored arbitrary detention of foreign citizens for political purposes.

The dispute is rooted in Canada's campaign to free its nationals Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who were arrested more than two years ago by China in apparent retaliation for Canada's arrest days earlier of a top Chinese tech executive, Meng Wanzhou, who is wanted in the U.S. on fraud charg-

es.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying on Thursday reiterated China's demand for Meng's immediate release and told reporters Beijing has complained to Ottawa over the declaration, calling it a "despicable and hypocritical act." "Canada colluded with some countries to issue a so-called declaration against arbitrary detention, and deliberately let the relevant people slander China's arbitrary detention of Canadian citizens Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor," Hua said at a daily briefing.

"Canada's so-called declaration looks more like a confession in which the Canadian side admits its mistake in the Meng Wanzhou case," Hua said.

"On the one hand, the Canadian side advocates that it adheres to the rule of law, but on the other hand, it acts as an accomplice of the U.S. and arbitrarily detains Chinese citizens."

Meng is a leading executive with Huawei and the daughter of the company's founder.

China says it has charged Kovrig and Spavor with endangering na-

tional security, but little is known about the accusations. In detention, they have been allowed only occasional visits from Canadian diplomats while Meng resides in one of her Vancouver mansions under a loose form of house arrest. In endorsing the declaration, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on "all like-minded countries to work together to pressure the nations that engage in such detentions to put an end to this practice, to release those detained under such conditions and to respect the rule of law and human rights." □

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California Lighthouse is closed for the public

NOORD — Five years after the restauration of the California Lighthouse, Foundation Monuments Fond Aruba (SMFA) will start with the maintenance work on this monument. From February 16th up till the beginning of April the lighthouse at Hudishibana will be closed for the public.

Contractor Projexon Group, won the public tender last year and will be in charge of the maintenance. In the interior they will be plastering the walls, painting the walls, repairing the wooden stairs and windows. The biggest change will be the installation of a rope known as 'stair handrail' in order to make climbing to the top easier and safer, but also to prevent people from touching the walls inside.

For what is the plaster or caulk that needs to be applied, there will be an expert of Limeworks Compa-

ny that will guide the whole application process of the product. That way they will be able to ensure that it will be done correctly. In this case it is extremely important to use the original material, which is the caulk, not only for it to last longer, but also to lower the maintenance cost. SMFA will be documenting this application process.

The location of the lighthouse and also due to the fact that the lighthouse was open to the public for the past five years, are factors that led to the deterioration of the lighthouse quicker than expected and therefore was decided to give it its proper maintenance in time. SMFA has a multi-year maintenance plan for all its monuments which indicates the maintenance works on each and every one of them in order to guarantee their good appearances.

SMFA would like to thank Experitours and the general public for their understanding and cooperation for the time that the lighthouse will be closed. □



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'Dinner under the Stars' at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa: Unforgettable, that's what you are!

EAGLE BEACH — If you go to Aruba, you must dine on the beach, toes in the sand, loved one on the side and culinary treats in front of you paired with some bubbles. Unforgettable, that's what you are ...Nat King Cole said it best. The title of the song applies to your partner, the setting on Manchebo Resort's beach and the food of famous Chef Sandro. Welcome to 'Dinner under the Stars' featuring you and her/him.

Escaping the cold weather to go find your tropical paradise is a wonderful thing to do. While mind mapping of this event, you include a romantic dinner on the beach, as you have seen it in multiple prospects of remote beaches, yes, that is what you want. On Aruba you may choose from different options but why not go for the number one beach; one of the best ones in the world: Eagle Beach.

Ike's Bistro at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa set up an amazing dinner on the beach. Picture this: you and your loved one walking to a dinner table decorated with subtle lights, the waiter pampers you all night long and you gazing out over the Caribbean blue watching the beautiful sunset with a sparkling wine in the hand. It all feels like the two of you alone in paradise. And this is only the beginning...



Appetizers are named "Romance in a Bowl" presenting a marriage of fresh lettuces, crumbled goat cheese, roasted almonds, grilled mushroom and homemade raspberry vinaigrette or "Temptation of the Sea," a delicious well-filled seafood chowder served with crostini bread, micro greens, paprika aioli & basil foam. The "Love Bird" main course carries corn-fed, free-range chicken; broiled and generously filled with honey cured ham and melted Gouda cheese,

served with grilled zucchini and yellow squash, radish salsa, al dente linguini pasta and saffron-white wine sauce. Second choice for the main course brings on "The loving Couple" serving an amazing Caribbean lobster tail broiled in lemon-herb butter till golden brown and perfectly grilled filet mignon, served with garlic baby potatoes, steamed veggies and rosemary demi-glace. There is a third winner called "The Love Boat," consisting of fresh grilled catch-of-the-day

combined with jumbo green shell mussels, black tiger shrimp and calamari, served with mango-citrus quinoa, roasted red pepper and zucchini and white-wine-beurre blanc sauce. The love carries on in the dessert which is a Sweethearts of white chocolate Baileys mousse, fresh strawberries and hazelnut ice-cream. Coffee and tea close this wondrous feast.

The Romantic Dinner under the Stars is a special event and we strongly suggest you take advantage of this happening while it lasts. It is the whole spectrum in one night, all of the above including a bottle of bubbles for \$160 per couple (taxes not included).

Call them at +297 582 3444 to reserve your table or contact them on Facebook: Ike's Bistro. Bon appetit! □



Aruba's underwater wonderland



ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamento, Papiamento is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance

and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken word war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue



ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven.□

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make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received some amazing pictures from **Jay and Linda Travers**. Let's hear their story:



"We are returning again this year to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. We are owners at Marriott's Ocean Club and will arrive 2/18 departing 3/7. We will spend our second week at the Surf Club with in between days at Marriott Stellaris Resort. We both got our COVID-19 vaccinations so we could return to our home away from home. We love Aruba - I fly the flag of Aruba from our balcony throughout our stay each year." □

4 tips for starting or reinventing a business in tough times

By HAL M. BUNDICK of NerdWallet undefined

Think the best time to start a business is in a booming economy? Maybe. But some of the biggest business success stories in recent decades actually came from a good idea hatched during a recession.

Consider these names: CNN, Uber, Airbnb and Square. There are many more.

The effects of COVID-19 are forcing existing businesses to reinvent themselves, and some of today's most significant business obstacles will spark new startups offering innovative solutions.

With the pandemic quickly shifting consumer behavior, more than \$3 trillion is expected to be lost or moved to the businesses best prepared to exploit the possibilities, according to a November 2020 Accenture analysis.

Here are ways to formulate and recognize business opportunities during tough times.

1. ADAPT RAPIDLY TO A CHANGING MARKET

During the Great Recession in 2008, Jonathan Slain was an owner of personal



A passer-by pulls luggage while walking past a sign offering directions to an Uber and Lyft ride pickup location at Logan International Airport, in Boston, Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021.

Associated Press

training and fitness studios. That's a personal expense many people will eliminate when money is tight.

"So I spent several months of the recession huddled under my desk, trying to figure out what to do," Slain says. He needed money for operations and payroll and eventually borrowed money from his mother-in-law to keep his business afloat. Every two weeks, he had

to go back to her to cover payroll; there were "10 excruciating phone calls," he says, and he ultimately borrowed a total of \$250,000. Eventually, he was able to pay her back.

Now a business consultant in Ohio, Slain co-wrote the book "Rock the Recession: How Successful Leaders Prepare for, Thrive During, and Create Wealth After Downturns." He says the

lessons he learned from failure, combined with insight gained from his friend and co-author, Paul Belair, guide a profitable recession strategy.

As he says in the book, "Learn from my mistakes. Don't be like me. Be like Paul." Belair owned a heating and air conditioning company during the same recession.

Knowing that customers

would buy fewer new units but opt for service instead, Belair and his management team flipped the company's focus from 80% sales to 80% service. The nimble pivot allowed Belair and his investors to sell the business about five years later for over 80 times their original investment, Slain says.

The lesson: Rapidly adapt to a changing market, rather than banking on a relative.

2. TRY TO FIX SOMETHING THAT BOTHERS YOU

Whether the result of inspiration or desperation, many successful businesses are created by someone trying to fix something that bothers them, says serial entrepreneur Trevor Blake.

"They found something that kept bugging them, realized there was no fix for it and set about fixing it themselves. By default, they became entrepreneurs," Blake says. "When something gets under my skin enough that I want to fix it, I suddenly have a winning idea. Of course, at the time, I have no clue how I am going to fix it, but that is half the fun. We can all figure solutions out eventually," Blake adds. □

Experts: Gulf freeze may boost gas prices, but only briefly

By MATT OTT
AP Business Writer

Add one more potential item to the list of economic hardships dealt to Americans in the past 11 months: rising gas prices.

But you can't blame it on the coronavirus pandemic. This one is on Mother Nature.

A deep freeze in the Gulf state region and beyond that killed dozens of people, left millions without power and jeopardized drinking water systems also forced as many as 11 refineries offline, according to travel app GasBuddy. The resulting capacity cuts could drive gas prices up by about 10 to 20 cents per gallon, said Patrick DeHaan, the head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. The national average for a

gallon of gas is currently between \$2.54 and \$2.57 depending on who you ask, meaning prices could rise to around \$2.75 per gallon fairly quickly. That would be the highest price since the summer of 2019 and the highest seasonal price in more than five years, according to GasBuddy.

Fortunately, it shouldn't last long, assuming refineries get up and running at full strength after the frigid weather moves out.

"Once power is restored, once temperatures rise above freezing, refineries will restart, oil production will restart and it shouldn't have more than a several-weeks impact," DeHaan said.

Also, because gas demand has fallen as the pandemic forced millions of people to

work from home, there are adequate reserves to prevent prices from rising too much.

"In terms of transportation fuels demand, it's kind of an opportune time," said Tom Kloza, global head of energy analysis at Oil Price Information Service. "Gasoline demand is quite low and it's going to continue to be low well into March. And we have very, very high inventories of product."

Kloza said gasoline demand is about 15% below pre-pandemic levels, which comports with data from the U.S. Department of Transportation that estimates a 13.7% decrease in cumulative vehicles miles from January through November of 2020. And that includes positive gains in January and February be-



Gasoline and Diesel prices are displayed on a pump at a Shell gas station, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021, in Westwood, Mass.

Associated Press

fore the pandemic struck the U.S.

Demand for gas will be extremely low next week, Kloza said, but stressed that the recent weather-caused supply cuts won't change his projections for the year.

"We think there will be enough mojo or enough things happening, a significant recovery in gasoline demand on the other side of the vaccinations that maybe we'll get up to a national average of \$2.75 or \$2.80," Kloza said. □

U.N.: Huge changes in society needed to keep nature, Earth OK

BY SETH BORENSTEIN

AP Science Writer

Humans are making Earth a broken and increasingly uninhabitable planet through climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. So the world must make dramatic changes to society, economics and daily life, a new United Nations report says.

Unlike past U.N. reports that focused on one issue and avoided telling leaders actions to take, Thursday's report combines three intertwined environment crises and tells the world what's got to change. It calls for changing what governments tax, how nations value economic output, how power is generated, the way people get around, fish and farm, as well as what they eat.

"Without nature's help, we will not thrive or even survive," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "For too long, we have been waging a senseless and suicidal war on nature. The result is three interlinked environmental crises."

Thus the 168-page report title is blunt: "Making Peace With Nature."

"Our children and their children will inherit a world of extreme weather events, sea level rise, a drastic loss of plants and animals, food and water insecurity and increasing likelihood of future pandemics," said report lead author Sir Robert



In this Monday, Feb. 1, 2021 file photo, emissions from a coal-fired power plant are silhouetted against the setting sun in Independence, Mo.

Associated Press

Watson, who has chaired past UN science reports on climate change and biodiversity loss.

"The emergency is in fact more profound than we thought only a few years ago," said Watson, who has been a top level scientist in the U.S. and British governments.

This year "is a make-it or break-it year indeed because the risk of things becoming irreversible is gaining ground every year," Guterres said. "We are close to the point of no return."

The report highlighted what report co-author Rachel

Warren of the University of East Anglia called "a litany of frightening statistics that hasn't really been brought together:"

- Earth is on the way to an additional 3.5 degrees warming from now (1.9 degrees Celsius), far more than the international agreed upon goals in the Paris accord.
- About 9 million people a year die from pollution.
- About 1 million of Earth's 8 million species of plants and animals are threatened with extinction.
- Up to 400 million tons of heavy metals, toxic sludge

and other industrial waste are dumped into the world's waters every year.

- More than 3 billion people are affected by land degradation, and only 15% of Earth's wetlands remain intact.
- About 60% of fish stocks are fished at the maximum levels. There are more than 400 oxygen-depleted "dead zones" and marine plastics pollution has increased tenfold since 1980. "In the end it will hit us," said biologist Thomas Lovejoy, who was a scientific advisor to the report. "It's not what's happening to elephants.

It's not what's happening to climate or sea level rise. It's all going to impact us."

The planet's problems are so interconnected that they must be worked on together to be fixed right, Warren said. And many of the solutions, such as eliminating fossil fuel use, combat multiple problems including climate change and pollution, she said.

The report "makes it clear that there is no time for linear thinking or tackling problems one at a time," said University of Michigan environment professor Rosina Bierbaum, who wasn't part of the work.

In another break, this report gives specific solutions that it says must be taken.

This report uses the word "must" 56 times and "should" 37 times. There should be 100 more because action is so crucial, said former U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres, who wasn't part of the report.

"Time has totally ran out. That's why the word 'must' is in there," Figueres said.

The report calls for an end to fossil fuel use and says governments should not tax labor or production, but rather use of resources that damages nature. "Governments are still playing more to exploit nature than to protect it," Guterres said. "Globally, countries spend some 4 to 6 trillion dollars a year on subsidies that damage the environment." □

Sicilian village cleans up ash, stones from Mt Etna eruption



Lava gushes from the Mt Etna volcano near Catania, Sicily, Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021.

Associated Press

PEDARA, Sicily (AP) — Resi-

dents and municipal teams

worked Wednesday to clean up a Sicilian village near Mount Etna after Europe's most active volcano spewed lava, ashes and volcanic stones.

The eruption, which featured spectacular displays of gushing lava, forced the temporary closure of Sicily's Catania Airport, a frequent occurrence when Etna is in an active phase.

As Tuesday's volcanic activity was largely expected, areas surrounding the crater were secured and there were no reported injuries or deaths. But nearby residents said the eruption was

unusual in that big chunks of volcanic stones carpeted the area, not just ash.

"It was a rain of stones. Something I never saw in my entire life," Pedara resident Letizia Olivieri said.

Pedara Mayor Alfio Cristaldo said the village was in emergency mode from the extent of the eruption.

"The entire territory of Pedara and all the streets are covered in volcanic ashes and lapillus," or volcanic stones, he said. Residents and local teams cleaned streets, courtyards and cars, bagging the ash and waiting for municipal collectors

to take it away. Driving motorbikes and scooters was forbidden, and the speed limit for cars was reduced to limit the further spread of ash. Pedara resident Massimiliano Formica said he was at home Tuesday afternoon when he heard what he thought was the beginning of a rainstorm. But when he looked outside, he saw it was "raining in a weird way. I went out and I saw soil falling down. Also big stones." Etna is a popular tourist destination, and its eruptions, especially when seen at night, are spectacular to watch. □



An Australian Broadcasting Corporation page on Facebook is displayed without posts in Sydney, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021.

Associated Press

By ROD McGUIRK

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)

— Facebook announced Thursday it has blocked Australians from viewing and sharing news on the platform because of proposed laws in the country to make digital giants pay for journalism.

Australian publishers can continue to publish news content on Facebook, but links and posts can't be viewed or shared by Australian audiences, the U.S.-based company said in a statement.

Australian users cannot share Australian or international news.

International users outside Australia also cannot share Australian news.

"The proposed law fundamentally misunderstands the relationship between our platform and publishers who use it to share news content," Facebook regional managing director William Easton said.

"It has left us facing a stark choice: attempt to comply with a law that ignores the realities of this relationship, or stop allowing news content on our services in Australia. With a heavy heart, we are choosing the latter," Easton added.

The announcement comes a day after Treasurer Josh Frydenberg described as "very promising" negotiations between Facebook and Google with Australian media companies.

Frydenberg said after weekend talks with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Sundar Pichai, chief executive of Alphabet Inc. and its subsidiary Google, he was convinced that the platforms "do want to enter into these commercial ar-

rangements."

Frydenberg said he had had a "a constructive discussion" with Zuckerberg after Facebook blocked Australian news.

"He raised a few remaining issues with the Government's news media bargaining code and we

Facebook blocks Australians from access- ing news on platform

agreed to continue our conversation to try to find a pathway forward," Frydenberg tweeted.

But communications Minister Paul Fletcher said the government would not back down on its legislative agenda.

"This announcement from Facebook, if they were to maintain this position, of course would call into question the credibility of the platform in terms of the news on it," Fletcher told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

The Australian Parliament is debating proposed laws that would make the two

platforms strike deals to pay for Australian news. □

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A compellingly cruel Rosamund Pike in 'I Care a Lot'

By JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

An air of mystery surrounded Rosamund Pike in "Gone Girl" but there's no mistaking her in "I Care a Lot." Sporting designer suits and a bob cut so sharp that you tremble for her stylist, Pike's Marla Grayson is ruthlessly imperious from head to toe. The title of J Blakeson's sleekly sinister neo-noir is tongue and cheek. Marla, a shark on par with Gordon Gekko or Jaws, doesn't care even a little. She's a legal guardian to dozens of elderly people whom she bilks for everything they're worth. A wall of their faces and names adorns her Boston office the way stock portfolios might a financier.

"Playing fair is a joke invented by rich people to keep the rest of us poor," she intones in the movie's opening voice over. When so much real terror is stalking nursing homes, the timing of "I Care a Lot" (it debuts Friday on Netflix) is perhaps not ideal. Marla's scheme is a particularly loathsome one, and the feeling of disgust only grows as writer-director Blakeson, the British filmmaker of the



This image released by Netflix shows, from left, Eiza González, Dianne Wiest and Rosamund Pike in a scene from "I Care A Lot."

Associated Press

kidnap thriller "The Disappearance of Alice Creed," depicts an interwoven system of elder abuse, with doctors and nursing home managers all taking a cut. One of them hands Marla a "cherry" — an especially desirable new ward because she's both wealthy and lacking any apparent living family that might interfere — in Jennifer (Dianne Wiest). A few falsified health records and a judge's rubber stamp later, Jennifer is abruptly hauled

off to a facility where her phone is taken and even straying outside is off limits. Marla and her partner-girlfriend (Eiza González), quickly start auctioning off her stuff.

At this point, "I Care a Lot" seems poised to become another nightmare of wrongful institutionalization — a "Shock Corridor" for rest homes. Having Dianne Wiest locked up is no less infuriating than Jack Nicholson being strapped into a mental hospital. But the

twists and turns of "I Care a Lot" lead elsewhere — in more comic, off-balanced but generally deviously delightful directions.

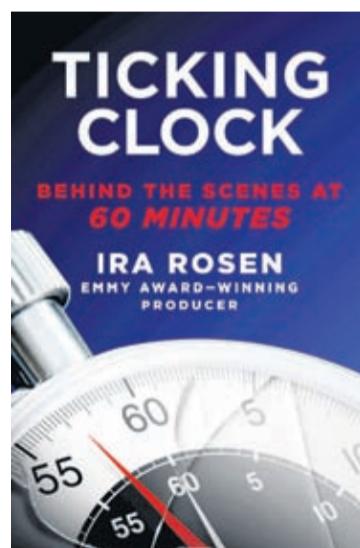
Jennifer turns out to be not just a meek old lady living alone but the mother of a powerful and well-financed underworld figure with ties to the Russian mafia, Roman Lunyov (Peter Dinklage). Dinklage, as he often does, immediately recalibrates the movie, as Roman summons his forces — minions who cower be-

fore him while he snacks on an eclair or sips a smoothie — to free his mother.

It also rebalances our allegiance. There is, in one sense, no one to root for "I Care a Lot," a movie where the most sympathetic figure drugs her imprisoned wards to keep them quiet. Instead, Blakeson's film is gleefully amoral, less concerned with judging its obviously heinous characters than crafting a satire of American capitalism as a system where human trafficking is a mode of doing business.

It also positions Marla as something more than a greedy vulture. Her resistance to the various entreaties from Roman's team — foremost among them is a very good Chris Messina as a knowing attorney who nevertheless can't match Marla in court — seems reckless and foolish at first. Who would dare turn down a fearsome, well-armed international mafioso who, in this case, also happens to be in the right? But Marla's resistance, as a woman undeterred by male intimidation, accumulates in courage. □

Review: An insider's look behind the '60 Minutes' stopwatch



This cover image released by St. Martin's Press shows "Ticking Clock: Behind the Scenes at 60 Minutes" by Ira Rosen.

Associated Press

By JEFF ROWE
Associated Press

"Ticking Clock: Behind the Scenes at 60 Minutes," by Ira Rosen (St. Martin's Press) Long-time multi-award winning producer Ira Rosen

has written a sometimes sad, often funny, always revealing portrait of American television's most famous and successful news show, "60 Minutes." Rosen certainly had reporting time for this book — he was a producer at the CBS show for nearly 25 years. In anecdotes and conversations, Rosen offers an engaging tutorial on how "60 Minutes" signature high-quality mini-documentaries are produced but perhaps the book's most important contribution comes in ratifying the essential role of skilled, tenacious journalism in maintaining a democracy.

In 2007, for example Rosen produced a piece on how members of Congress sold stock based in information learned in closed meetings — insider trading.

"The more you know about

politicians, the worse they appear," Rosen writes.

Misdeeds of our elected representatives provided a steady stream of story topics for "60 Minutes" in the Rosen years, less so now as more show segments appear to be linked to the news and fewer pieces are investigative.

"60 Minutes" emerges as a less-than great place to work, at least in the era of founder Don Hewitt. He shunned staff meetings and essentially let producers and correspondents fight it out for stories and airtime. Correspondent Mike Wallace thrived in that untamed workplace, poaching stories from his fellow correspondents, berating producers and abusing women staffers.

Rosen produced for Wallace for nine years but never truly learned to manage

the star correspondent's outbursts and general bad behavior.

Rosen related how Wallace once barged into Rosen's office, demanding to know who was on the phone. Rosen said nothing, handed the phone to Wallace and left the room. Rosen had been talking to his mother.

Wallace never again interrupted Rosen's phone calls. And for critics who consider the news media as collectively left-leaning, consider this: In a post-presidency interview with Jimmy Carter, Wallace avoided asking Carter a question the answer to which likely would reflect badly on the Reagans. Wallace was a "friend and defender" of the Reagans, the book notes.

A fundamental journalism tenet is that a principled reporter cannot be friends

or have relationships with people or institutions in their reporting orbit.

By contrast, Lesley Stahl, Bill Whitaker and Anderson Cooper emerge as standout reporters and polite, considerate, caring people. Ed Bradley was a producer favorite.

Rosen produced "60 Minutes" pieces into the Trump presidency, a traumatic time for journalists everywhere. He retired in 2019 and misses the powerful investigative pieces of the program's glory days. □

1	5	3	4	2	6	9	8	7
7	6	8	9	1	3	5	2	4
4	9	2	7	5	8	1	3	6
9	3	6	8	7	1	4	5	2
5	7	4	6	3	2	8	1	9
8	2	1	5	9	4	7	6	3
3	4	7	1	6	5	2	9	8
6	8	5	2	4	9	3	7	1
2	1	9	3	8	7	6	4	5

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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Blue Jays expect to play in Florida, Buffalo and Toronto

By ROB GILLIES
Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The Blue Jays expect to split the home portion of this year's regular-schedule among their spring training complex in Dunedin, Florida, their Triple-A ballpark in Buffalo, New York, and the Rogers Center in Toronto. Toronto announced Thursday it will play the first two homestands of the season in Dunedin because of Canadian government restrictions during the pandemic. Team president Mark Shapiro said a return to Buffalo is a likely option in June because of the heat and humidity in Florida. He hopes for games in Toronto at some point during the summer.

"The alternatives for our season lie with some combination of Dunedin, Buffalo and Toronto," Shapiro said.

The Blue Jays played home games during the shortened 2020 season in Buffalo and were 17-9 at Sahlen Field, home of their Buffalo Bisons Triple-A farm team. The Canadian government didn't allow the team to play at home because of the risk of spreading COVID-19, citing frequent travel required in the U.S. during a baseball season.

Shapiro said he didn't ask the Canadian government to start the season in Toronto because public health has not yet improved sufficiently and the border re-



Toronto Blue Jays' Rowdy Tellez signs autographs for fans before a spring training baseball game against the Philadelphia Phillies in Dunedin, Fla., in this Thursday, Feb. 28, 2019, file photo.

Associated Press

mains closed to non essential travel.

After starting the season with three-game series at the New York Yankees and Texas Rangers, Toronto's schedule has a homestand with four games against the Los Angeles Angels from April 8-11 and the Yankees from April 12-14.

The Blue Jays follow with a trip to Kansas City, Boston and Tampa Bay, then have home games against Washington on April 27-28 and Atlanta from April 30 to May 2. That is followed by a 10-game trip to Oakland, Houston and Atlanta.

It remains unlikely they would gain approval to play May games in Toronto.

A return home in the second half may be more realistic, after players and large segments of the population in the U.S. and Canada are vaccinated.

The TD Ballpark in Dunedin seats about 8,500 fans and had a major renovation in 2019-20. The Blue Jays intend to limit capacity to 15%.

Toronto last played at 49,000-capacity Rogers Centre on Sept. 29, 2019, an 8-3 win over Tampa Bay. "That's where we want to be," Shapiro said. "That's just not a realistic possibility right now with the circumstances being what they are and with the border being closed."

Shapiro said Buffalo might not have to be used as an option if the Blue Jays are allowed to play in Toronto sooner expected. He said the Triple-A affiliate team in Buffalo would shift games elsewhere if the major league team plays in Buffalo, and the Blue Jays would need to build a permanent weight room if fans are allowed to attend games in Buffalo. A temporary weight room last season was located on Sahlen Field's concourse. The border remains closed to nonessential travelers who are not Canadian citizens. Canada requires those entering the country to isolate for 14 days. And

starting Monday, air travelers who arrive in Canada will be forced to quarantine in a hotel for up to three nights as they await the result of a coronavirus test.

Ongoing challenges with the pandemic and how that affects the process of crossing the border between the U.S. and Canada will also keep the Toronto Raptors in their adopted Tampa, Florida, home for the remainder of the regular season, the NBA team said last week.

Blue Jays ace Hyun-Jin Ryu signed with the team before the 2020 season and has yet to pitch a game in Toronto.

"Last season we had a new park and adjustments that we had to make," Ryu said through a translator in Dunedin. "All these struggles we need to overcome."

Catcher Danny Jansen called TD Ballpark is a hitters' park.

"It plays a little smaller," he said. "We're going to have to deal with it."

Jansen said the team is spoiled to have a newly renovated complex in Florida.

"It's obviously nicer weather here than it is in Buffalo," he said.

Blue Jays manager Charlie Montoyo is happy to know where home games will be after not knowing last year until just before the season's start. □

NFL to test new position-specific helmet designed for pros

By TIM BOOTH
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — The NFL says the first position-specific helmet created for its players represents a major step in helmet technology, though it must still undergo testing by the league and the players' union before being authorized for use. The helmet released this week by VICIS provides additional support in the front, where most head impacts take place for offensive and defensive linemen.

"It's the stated goal of ours

when we started down this road of helmet testing and better understanding concussions and on-field impacts that we would get to the place where helmets would be built for individual positions," NFL spokesman Jeff Miller said Thursday.

The league has shared tracking data about head impacts and in turn the data has allowed manufacturers to develop new technologies in an attempt to create a safer helmet.

VICIS, Riddell, Xenith and

Schutt all have made models that have rated highly in the league's testing in recent years. In 2020, the Riddell SpeedFlex Precision Diamond was the top-rated helmet.

For its newest offering, VICIS vice president of product development Jason Neubauer said the company partnered with veteran NFL offensive lineman Justin Britt, who did not play in 2020 after suffering a major knee injury in 2019, and local youth linemen in the Seattle area to work through the various iterations.

Neubauer said the company went through more than 10 models before finally settling on the one being manufactured.

He said the extra support in the front area of the helmet adds about six ounces of weight. Other than that, the new ZERO2 Trench helmet is the same as the company's ZERO2 helmet, which is now used by NFL players.

The NFL is attempting to provide additional data that could lead to other developments, specifically

ly for quarterbacks.

Miller said for the first time this year, the league's helmet testing will specifically analyze and test helmets based on the head impacts quarterbacks have taken.

Miller said the league has analyzed all quarterback concussions and will test helmets in the areas where those hits have led to head injuries. Most have come from back-of-the-head impacts when quarterback are thrown to the ground and are unable to brace themselves. □

Serena stopped: Osaka beats Williams in Australian Open SF

MELBOURNE, Australia

(AP) — As Serena Williams walked off the court after her latest so-close-yet-so-far bid for a 24th Grand Slam title ended with a loss to Naomi Osaka at the Australian Open, the 39-year-old American paused and put her hand on her chest while thousands of spectators rose to applaud.

Was this, Williams was asked at a news conference after the 6-3, 6-4 semifinal defeat, her way of saying goodbye?

"If I ever say farewell," she replied with a smile, "I wouldn't tell anyone."

When the next question returned the conversation to the subject of Williams' many mistakes Thursday (Wednesday night EST) — twice as many unforced errors, 24, as winners, 12 — she shook her head, teared up, said, "I'm done," and abruptly walked out of the session with reporters.

On Saturday, at 7:30 p.m. local time (3:30 a.m. EST), Osaka will meet first-time Grand Slam finalist Jennifer Brady of the United States for the championship. The 22nd-seeded Brady, who is from Pennsylvania and played college tennis at UCLA, prevailed in an epic, 18-point last game to edge No. 25 Karolina Muchova 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 in the semifinals. Brady dropped to her back at the baseline after saving a trio of break points, then converting her fifth match point when Muchova sent a forehand long.

"My legs are shaking," Brady said.

"My heart is racing."

She lost to Osaka in a three-set thriller in the U.S. Open semifinals last September.

"Everyone's just really excited whenever they play their first final," Osaka noted about what awaits Brady, "but they're also really nervous."



Japan's Naomi Osaka, left, is congratulated by United States' Serena Williams after winning their semifinal match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021.

Associated Press

Williams was hoping to get to her 34th Grand Slam final but, once again, couldn't quite get the job done in order to add one more Grand Slam trophy to her collection of 23 and equal Margaret Court for the most in tennis history.

Osaka, who also beat Williams in the chaotic 2018 U.S. Open final that concluded with the crowd booing and both women in tears, reached her fourth major title match and stretched her winning streak to 20 matches by claiming the last eight points.

"I don't know if there's any little kids out here today, but I was a little kid watching her play," Osaka, 23, said about Williams, "and just to be on the court playing against her, for me, is a dream."

The No. 3-seeded Osaka's Grand Slam collection also includes last year's U.S. Open and the 2019 Austra-

lian Open and she is, without a doubt, the most dangerous hard-court player in the women's game at the moment.

That used to be Williams, of course. But she was off-target too much in this contest.

"I could have won. I could have been up 5-Love," said Williams, who instead took a 2-0 lead at the outset before dropping the next five games. "I just made so many errors."

Her forehand, in particular, went awry, with no fewer than 10 unforced errors off that side in the first set alone.

"Too many mistakes there," she said. "Easy mistakes."

Williams' frustration was made plain early in the second set, when she leaned over and screamed, "Make a shot! Make a shot!"

After collecting her professional era-record 23rd Slam singles trophy at Melbourne Park while pregnant in

2017, Williams has reached four major finals and lost them all.

She's also now lost in the semifinals twice in the past three majors.

That stage hasn't been a problem for top-ranked Novak Djokovic, who has won 14 of his last semifinals at Grand Slam events. His record is perfect in semifinals at Melbourne Park, improving to 9-0 with a 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win late Thursday over Aslan Karatsev, a Russian qualifier who was ranked No. 114 and making his debut in a major.

Djokovic is seeking a ninth Australian Open title and 18th Grand Slam trophy overall. Karatsev was playing in his first Grand Slam tournament.

Rafael Nadal — who lost in the quarterfinals to Stefanos Tsitsipas after blowing a two-set lead — and Roger Federer are tied for the men's record of 20.

Spectators were back in the stands on Thursday after they were barred from attending the tournament for five days during a local COVID-19 lockdown. About 7,000 people were allowed into the stadium for Williams-Osaka, roughly half of capacity.

Ushers walked through the

aisles at changeovers to remind fans they needed to wear a mask over their nose and mouth.

On the hottest day of the hard-court tournament so far — the temperature topped 85 degrees Fahrenheit (30 Celsius) — Osaka got out to a shaky start, perhaps prodded into pressing in her opening service game by a booming cross-court backhand return winner from Williams on the match's second point. That was followed by a double-fault, a wild forehand and, eventually, a netted backhand that handed over a break. Quickly, Williams went up 2-0, then held another break point with a chance to lead 3-0 after another double-fault by Osaka.

"I was just really, like, nervous and scared, I think, at the beginning," said Osaka, who was born in Japan and moved to the U.S. when she was 3. "And then I sort of eased my way into it."

Didn't take long to right herself.

Suddenly, it was Osaka powering in aces, putting groundstrokes right where she wanted, covering the court so well. Williams' movement has been terrific in Melbourne, but she was flat-footed this time.

Osaka never has tried to hide how much she admires Williams and models her game after the American's.

Both are predicated on the same basic elements of big serves and quick-strike forehands, and not only did Osaka do both better on this day, she even sounded just like her idol, screaming "Come on!" after several key shots.

There was one last test for Osaka. A trio of double-faults in one game — she wound up with eight for the match — allowed Williams to break for 4-all.

But Williams would not win another point.

Osaka regained her composure immediately, breaking back at love with the help of a pair of backhand winners and a double-fault from Williams, then holding at love to end it. □



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